

Wednesday, October 31, 2001 **Duxbury Clipper**

Spirits from the Past: Charles Turner House

By DEBORA BABIN KATZ

When Marcia and Christopher Clough purchased their Soule Avenue home in 1996, they knew the 18th century house and barn would require a great deal of work to preserve. But soon after they moved in, the Cloughs realized they faced a different kind of challenge.

"During the first weeks and months we were living here, he really made his presence known to us," Marci Clough said of the spirit they dubbed "Charles".



The Reverend Charles Turner House.

Photo by Debora Katz

Clough said her first encounter was on the attic stairs. "I was vacuuming the bathroom just across from the attic door when I turned to find it open and saw a man standing on the attic stairwell." She first thought the man was her husband, but Clough realized it was something else when he walked up the stairs and stood looking down at her. He then disappeared around the center chimney in the attic, she recalled.

Marci climbed the stairwell after him. When she found no one, she decided to speak to him directly. "I didn't necessarily want him out of the house, I just



didn't want him to interact in our daily lives," she said.

During those first weeks in the house, which was built by the Reverend Charles Turner in 1755, the Cloughs moved things into storage in this attic where Marci encountered the ghost of Charles (the house maintains two separate attics.) Spirits tend to limit themselves to certain places in a house, usually in a space that was important to them during their lifetime. Attics and basements are popular spaces for spirits; not because they are dark and dismal but because they often contain family heirlooms, forgotten toys and other items, which may be important to the spirit, noted Haden Blackman, a paranormal expert and author of *"The Field Guide to North American Hauntings."*

Marci said she often found the attic door locked when no one in the family had closed it, or the lights periodically turned on and off. The attic's wooden deadbolt, which slides into a carved opening in the door casement, requires muscle power to close so the family always leaves it open. A few times they found the door closed tightly with the deadbolt in place, and believe the spirit was trying to keep them out of

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the attic.

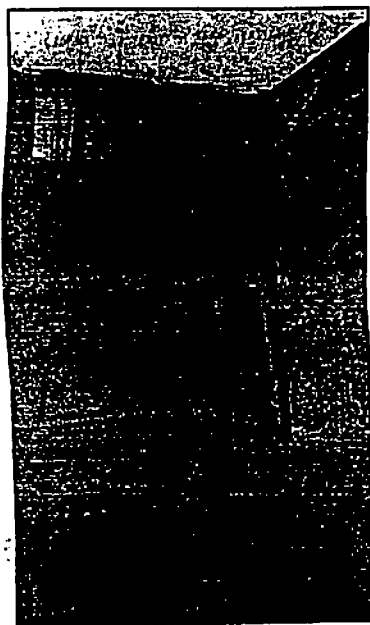
The Cloughs also discovered they were not alone with the ghost of Charles. Two female ghosts made their voices known during the family's first year in the house. The "Cook" as she is called by the family resides in an area that was once the kitchen of the house in the early 1800s. There is the "Singing Lady" who on occasion is heard singing downstairs late at night. A female spirit appears mostly in their daughter Victoria's bedroom and is believed to be a prior resident who died in the house. Unlike Charles, however, these spirits are jovial and reside harmoniously with the family.

"The greater the ghostly population within a particular house, the more likely it is that each spirit will contract its range as the ghosts attempt to 'share' the home," noted

Blackman. Clearly, this is the case in the Clough's house, as each spirit seems to keep to a certain area of the house, particularly ones most significant to them in their mortal lives.

There is some evidence that a former owner also experienced strange, unexplainable things in the house. While painting the trim work on some of the doors, the couple found small skeleton heads, about an inch long and half inch wide, carved from bone. They were placed on top of the trim, and were found on doors which lead to the outside, as if to ward off something evil from coming into the house. "I haven't wanted to remove them for fear of what might happen, so we made sure we put them back," after painting, said Marci Clough.

The family decided to accept the spirits residing in their house as long as they did not interfere with their daily lives. Unfortunately, the ghost of Charles became more of a nuisance. "About four and half years after we had been living here, Charles really started act-



View of stairs to attic.

Photo by Debora Katz

ing up" and began making visits to the couple's bedroom at night, noted Marci Clough.

There were several incidences where the ghost of Charles sat on their bed, stroked the side of Marci's head and even once "hit" Chris Clough while he lay in bed. "One night it felt like I was hit square on the face; it didn't feel like I had been physically hit by a hand, it was a weird feeling," said Chris.

"Any ghost who gets a sleeping occupant of a haunted house is definitely dangerous," noted Blackman. Such behavior is usually first seen as simple pranks, but eventually the spirit may batter victims while asleep and even try to smother them with a pillow, he added.

It was apparent to Chris and Marci that their ghost's behavior was inappropriate, and they needed to get outside help. The couple decided to call Ellen Donovan Townsend, a psychic who currently works at the Lavender Moon in Sandwich. When Marci first met Townsend at a function several years earlier, she told Marci, "He's in the attic." "Oh?" This took Marci by surprise since the psychic knew there were two separate attics in her house. Townsend, however, was already familiar with the Charles Turner House. She was a long-time friend of a former owner who died in the house.

What the couple would learn from this psychic proved important to solving the disruptions caused by the ghost of Charles. Townsend told the couple about some "critical documents in a locked chest" which Charles the ghost was worried about and was messing with because they were an untruth. She also noted that Charles had some "money issue."

in-law who he had treated incorrectly and tried to fix but could not, recalled Chris Clough.

"Haunted locales usually have some dark secret or tragic history," Blackman said. In the case of Charles the ghost, Townsend believed he was taunted by a past lie he was unable to undo. The psychic told them Charles the ghost was crying and upset. She recommended the use of pennies to try to appease Charles. "She told us to plant 3 pennies in the dirt by the road and to place a penny and purple clover on the grave of the Reverend Charles Turner," added Chris.

Interestingly, the house history reveals that the mortal Reverend Charles Turner did not have a pleasant ending in Duxbury. His life in town started off well with his ordination in the second meeting-house near the old burying ground on Chestnut Street in 1755. He purchased the 40-acre farm and built the house and barn soon after. Two years later, he married Mary Rand.

In the beginning of his ministry career, he was well received by the townspeople,

although children did fear him. Seth Sprague once wrote about the Reverend Turner: "I remember that when I was a boy Parson Turner used to visit my father's house, he wore a very large white wig, he was a very austere man, and I was exceedingly afraid of him." (Seth Sprague lived where the current Duxbury Yacht Club golf course is located.)

The Reverend Turner prob-

The psychic believed the reason for the ghost Charles' poltergeist behavior was his displeasure in the Wicca rituals, which Marci along with her woman's group were practicing on the property.

ably would have lived happily ever after in Duxbury and this house on Soule Avenue if not for the American Revolution. "Mr. Turner had Tory leanings, not at all unusual at a time when many had been loyal subjects of the King...Duxbury was a Whig town and the parish had no sympathy for a preacher



looks up where she first encountered the ghost of Charles.

Photo by Debara Kutz

with Tory views," noted Dorothy Wentworth, the former town historian.

Eventually, the Reverend Turner was left with no choice but to resign. He sold his house and farm to the next minister and went to live in Scituate at his father's residence, where he soon changed his political views and became a patriot. He later moved to Maine where he died, leaving his hat and wig to the town of Turner Maine.

The psychic believed the reason for the ghost Charles' poltergeist behavior was his displeasure in the Wicca rituals, which Marci along with her woman's group were practicing on the property. The Wicca ritual ceremony for Samhain, which celebrates the bounty of the harvest, including a ritual fire outside on the property, occurred around the time that Charles had become most active in the house, noted Marci. The psychic believed Charles' own religious beliefs as a Quaker contradicted the things occurring in the house. Marci said she is considering no longer performing the Samhain ritual on her property. The psychic also explained how Marci's independence, strength and equality in her marriage also bothered the ghost of Charles, since this too was contrary to his beliefs and lifestyle as a mortal.

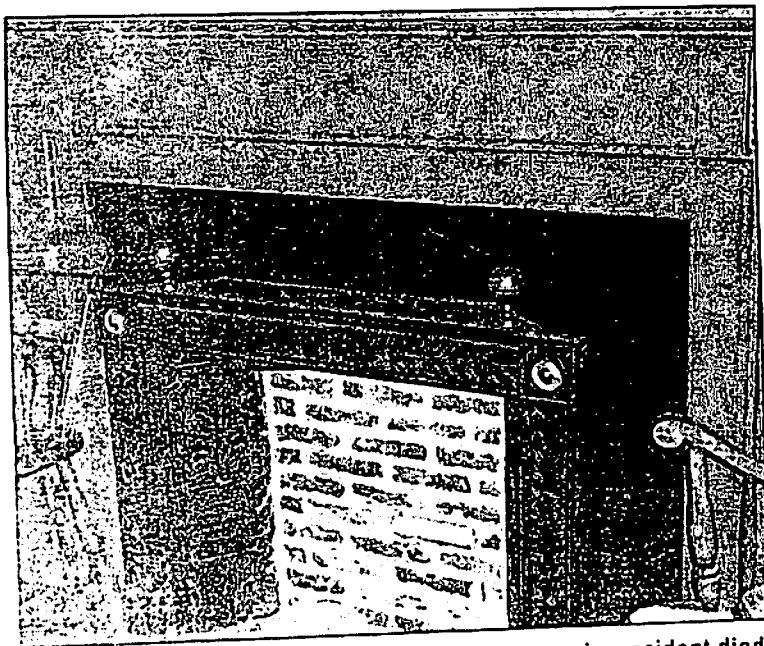
"Ellen recommended ritual actions for both the family to do together and others to do as individuals," said Chris Clough. She recommended that the Cloughs line the perimeter of their property with salt to correct the energy flow, and to plant purple clover on the property, since Charles found joy and happiness from the clover that once grew on the property. Chris was instructed to place hematite beads under his pillow each night to secure the male energy in the house.

Another thing Townsend instructed the Cloughs to do included hanging a painted family portrait in the house in order to show the spirits their family's ownership and stake in the house. The Cloughs have accomplished many of the psychic's suggestions and since then "the house is very quiet," said Marci Clough.

Postscript

I tracked down psychic Ellen Donovan Townsend who maintains a busy schedule reading houses. I asked her why she recommended the use of salt to line the boundary of the property. "Priests use holy water to do their work, witches use salt," she said. The clover was something that was appropriate for the Clough's house specifically, she said. "Each situation is different since every ghost is different," added Townsend who

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Fireplace in the front parlor music room where a prior resident died.

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said she gives a number of recommendations to the owner so they can choose what is comfortable for them.

I mentioned to this psychic a strange occurrence I personally had regarding the Reverend Charles Turner House. I took two photos of the skeleton head found above one door - one with the *Clipper's* digital camera and one with my camera containing slide film. When we downloaded the digital camera, the photograph only showed the black drop cloth - the skeleton head had "disappeared" from the frame. When I got the slide film back from the developer, the slide for this shot was completely blank. Townsend, although unfamiliar with the Clough's skeleton heads, was not surprised by my account. "There are things which can not be photographed or tape recorded," she said. "Someone may have placed a ritual over the skeleton heads to keep them invisible in the house," she added.

When I mentioned to Townsend the problems I ran into with my watch since touring Duxbury's historically haunted places (I'm now on my third watch as of this article), the psychic responded, "Oh, I can't even wear a watch." She explained how spirits give off electric transmissions, which interfere with watches and other instruments.

The following letter was received regarding *Spirits from the Past: When Tragedy Strikes* published October 24th:

Letter to the Editor: In regards to your "Historical Hauntings" story, I worked at the Chart House from 1981-84. During the summer of 1982, we repainted the inside of the restaurant. We would work from closing until sunrise so as not to disturb business. I would bring my German Shepard, Charlee with me for company. One night while I was painting the hallway to the cellar, she sensed something and ran to the front part of the Cape and barking and growling, stopping in a corner and showing the meanest face I have ever witnessed and then abruptly stopped. I later found out this was where Lysander was found. I believe my dog had "cornered" Lysander's spirit. I can also attest to Phil Fontaine's story of the candles. One night after blowing them all out I left the restaurant and dropped a friend off in East Duxbury before returning home to Keene St. While passing by the restaurant, it was obvious that all the candles were relit yet there was no one in the restaurant. Thanks for a great report! I love checking in on my hometown via computer. Keep up the great work!

Dan Leary
Traverse City, MI